This article was originally taken from Al-Basheer magazine, January-February, 1994.

This material has been reviewed and forwarded for publishing and distribution by the English language section of the Department of Islamic Resources.

Form #: 3015
Date: 9/1/1425

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The Conditions of Laa Ilaaha ill-Allah

by
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Introduction

Every Muslim knows that the key to Paradise is the statement, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah." Yet too many Muslims simply rely upon this statement and believe that as long as they have made this statement, nothing will harm them. They think will be granted Paradise because of this mere verbal statement of the Shahaadah.

There is no question that the mere saying of, "I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger," is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, the hypocrites used to make this statement quite often yet Allah describes them as liars and says that they shall abide in the lowest abyss of the Hell-fire.

As many scholars state, though, this statement or testimony is the key to Paradise. The famous Taabi'i[1] Wahb ibn Munabbih was once asked,

"Isn't the statement of laa ilaaha ill-Allah the key to Paradise?" He answered, "Yes, but every key has ridges. If you come with the key that has the right ridges, the door will open for you. Yet if you do not have the right ridges the door will not open for you."

That is, it is saying [while meeting] certain conditions. These conditions are what will differentiate the person who will benefit from his making of that statement from the one who will not benefit from that statement, no matter how many times a day he may have made that statements.

Before discussing the conditions of the Shahaadah, there is one more point that I feel compelled to make. That is, some people have a tendency to take one hadeeth or one verse and then based

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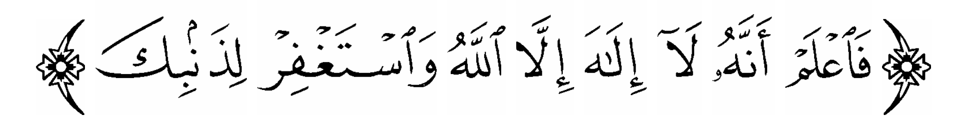
[1] **Taabi'I**, pl. **Taabi'oon:** Literally, follower. The generation who succeeded the Sahaabah, or Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

on that one text, they will make some conclusion that, for example, whoever simply says, "There is no God except Allah," will enter Paradise. But, actually, we should all realize that all of the Qur'aan and Hadeeth complement each other and explain one another. To find the correct position on any one question, one must bring together all of the related verses and hadeeth and see what the true Islamic position is of that question. The same is true for the conditions of the shahaadah.

If we study the verses of the Qur'aan and the Hadeeth of the Prophet (ﷺ), we will find that the conditions of the shahaadah are seven, eight or nine in number, depending on how we look at them. It is important that all of us make sure that we are meeting these conditions in our own lives and in our own testimony of faith. We must do our best to satisfy these conditions before it is too late and our testimony will be no avail whatsoever. It is not simply for the sake of teaching these conditions. Indeed, there is no benefit to that. But it is, instead, for all of us to look to ourselves and to make sure that we are actually meeting these conditions so that, by Allah's mercy, the doors to Paradise will be open for us by our key of laa ilaaha ill-Allah.

The First Condition: Knowledge

The first of these conditions is knowledge. That is, one must have the basic and general knowledge of what is meant by the shahaadah. One must understand what the shahaadah is affirming and what the shahaadah is denying. Allah says in the Qur'aan,

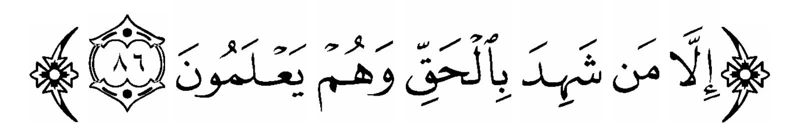


> **"So know that there is no God save Allah, and ask forgiveness for your sin."**
>
> [Surah Muhammad (47):19]

Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

> **"Whoever dies knowing that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah shall enter Paradise."** (Recorded by Muslim)

In fact, the shahaadah itself is a testimony. When one testifies to something, one must know what it is that he is testifying concerning. Obviously, a testimony about something that one does not have any knowledge about is absolutely unacceptable. Allah says in the Qur'aan,



> **"Save him who bears witness unto the truth knowingly."**
>
> [Surah az-Zukhruf (43):86]

Now this condition probably sounds obvious. If someone said to you, "There is no God except Allah," and then said that what he meant by Allah was Jesus, you would immediately tell him that

this shahaadah is nonsense. Yet can you imagine that there is a Muslim country in the world that until recently used to have a yearly week-long celebration to "the Gods of the Sea"! All along they call themselves Muslims and they make shahaadah numerous times a day. This clearly shows that they have no idea what the meaning of their shahaadah is. Do you think that this kind of shahaadah will open the doors to Paradise for them?

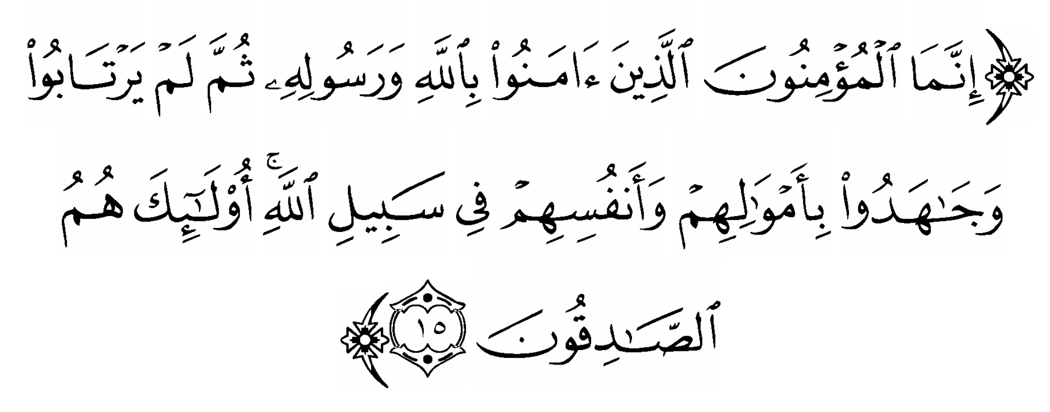
Today, there are many Muslims who wonder why we should not accept secularism. They think that there is nothing wrong with secularism! Many of these Muslims pray five times a day and utter the shahaadah repeatedly. Yet they see nothing wrong with accepting a Lawgiver other than Allah? What kind of shahaadah are these people making?

All of us do our best to learn at least the basics of Islamic beliefs. The basics of what shahaadah means. In this way, Allah willing, we will be making the correct shahaadah. We will be witnessing to the truth as we are supposed to be witnesses to it.

The Second Condition: Certainty

The second condition of the shahaadah is certainty (or al-yaqeen). This is the opposite of doubt and uncertainty. In Islam, in fact, any kind of doubt is equivalent to Kufr or disbelief. We must, in our hearts, be absolutely certain of the truth of the shahaadah. Our hearts must not be wavering in any way when we testify to the truth of, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah."

Allah describes the believers in the Qur'aan as those who have belief in Allah and then their hearts waver not. Allah says,



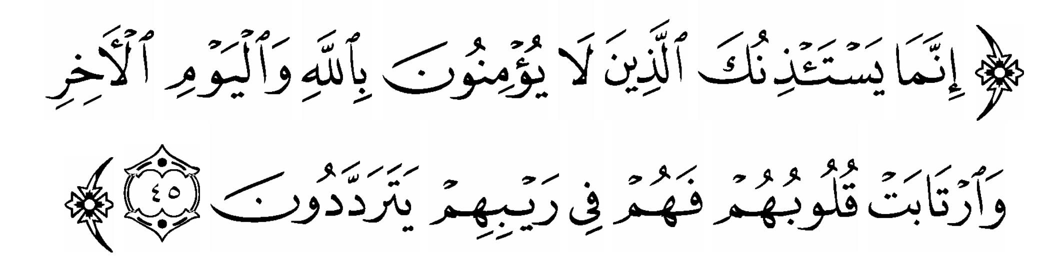
"The (true) believers are those only who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere."

[Surah al-Hujurat (49):15]

Similarly, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

"No one meets Allah with the testimony that there is none worthy of worship but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah, and he has no doubt about hat statement, excepthat he will enter Paradise." (Recorded by Muslim)

Indeed, Allah describes the hypocrites as those people whose hearts are wavering. For example, Allah says,



"They alone seek leave of thee (not to participate in jihad[2]) who believe not in Allah and the Last Day and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their doubt they waver."

[Surah at-Tawbah (9):45]

Many scholars have stated that the diseases of the heart, or the doubt and suspicions that one allows into one's heart, are more dangerous for a person's faith than lusts and desires. This is because lusts and desires may be satisfied at some time yet the person still knows them to be wrong and he may control himself and repent and give up that evil deed. On the other hand, the doubts and suspicions may linger in the heart, with no cure, until the person finally leaves Islam entirely or continues to practice Islam while, in fact, in his heart he does not have the true faith.

The greatest cure for these doubts is seeking knowledge. It is through sound knowledge of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah that most of these doubts will be removed. By study and understanding, one will attain certainty. And as one studies and learns more, his certainty will be made firmer and firmer.

I will give you just one example on this point. This is related to all of the doubts, suspicions and misconceptions that are circulating about the authenticity of the hadeeth literature. For example, some Muslims even claim that hadeeth were not recorded until at least 200 years after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Indeed, there

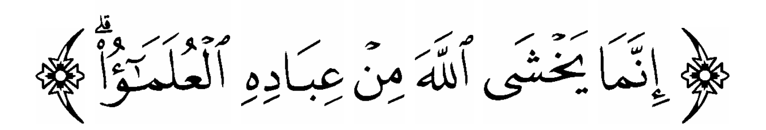
[2] **Jihaad:** Fighting the disbelievers to raise the Word of Allaah.

are Muslims who seem to have a great deal of doubt about hadeeth and are very quick to reject hadeeth on that basis. But, in fact, if one actually takes the time to study the history and preservation of hadeeth, one will immediately recognize that all those claims and charges against the hadeeth are not based on anything scientific whatsoever. They are nothing but false claims that come from Satan and which Muslims with poor understanding and knowledge have allowed to creep into their hearts.

Let me make one last point about this condition of certainty. As I alluded to earlier, doubts and misconceptions are very dangerous for a person's faith. Doubt and wavering are tantamount to apostasy in Islam, as I mentioned earlier. Hence, every Muslim should do best to safeguard himself from such doubts and remain away from the sources of doubts- especially if they are not well grounded in the Islamic sciences and do not have the knowledge to refute such doubts and misconceptions. Hence if a person has an associate or friend, even if he be a Muslim friend, who is always making him doubt Allah or the religion, then he should remain away from that person in order to safeguard his own religion. Many Muslims nowadays study courses on Islam taught by Orientalists, and because of their weak background in Islamic studies, they are influenced by the nonsense that some of these Orientalists are teaching in the name of" science".

Similarly, many brothers and sisters nowadays are spending hours at a time with the computer news groups and bulletin boards. A lot of nonsense and falsehood are posted on those news groups and bulletin boards. Again, the one who is not very knowledgeable of his religion may easily be influenced and affected by the misconceptions and false arguments that he reads in those bulletin boards. He should remain away from those things and get a deeper knowledge of Islam through the authentic sources of the religion.

Again, the greatest counterforce that can defeat doubts and misconceptions, after the bounty and guidance of Allah, is sound knowledge and understanding of the religion. When a person has that, he will not be affected by the weak arguments put out by the enemies of Islam and he will be, Allah willing, from among those described in the Qur'aan,



"It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah."

[Surah al-Faatir (35):28]

The Third Condition: Acceptance

The third condition of the shahaadah is acceptance (or al-qabool). If a person has the knowledge of and certainty in the shahaadah, this must be followed by acceptance, with the tongue and heart, of whatever that shahaadah implies. Whoever refuses to accept the shahaadah and its implications, even if he knows that it is true and certain about its truth, is a disbeliever. This refusal to accept is sometimes due to pride, envy or other reasons. In any case, the shahaadah is not a true shahaadah without its unconditional acceptance.

The scholars all talk about this condition as a general condition in the way that I have just stated. However, there is also a more detailed aspect that we must all be aware of. The believer accepts whatever the implications of the shahaadah are. This also means that he believes in whatever is stated in the Qur'aan or stated by the Prophet (ﷺ), without any right to choose what he wants to believe and what he wants to reject. Allah says in the Qur'aan,

﴿أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ فَمَا
جَزَآءُ مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَٰلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْىٌ فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا ۖ
وَيَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰٓ أَشَدِّ ٱلْعَذَابِ ۗ﴾

"Do you believe in part of the book and reject part of it? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most grievous doom."

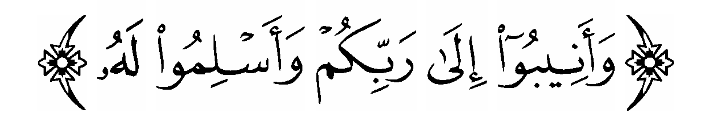
[Surah al-Baqarah (2):85]

This is one aspect that the Muslims must be aware of. Although it is not the same as the complete refusal to accept the truth, by rejecting part of the truth that has come from Allah, one also negates his testimony of faith.

Unfortunately, many Muslims are doing this nowadays in various ways. Although not all of these forms may necessarily be considered apostasy, they are still very dangerous. For example, if they do not like what is stated in a verse in the Qur'aan, they simply reinterpret the verse according to their liking. If they do not like what is stated in a hadeeth, they simply state that the hadeeth must not be authentic although they are not scholars in that area. This kind of behavior is the antithesis of the behavior of the true Muslims. Whatever comes from Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), the true Muslim believes in as the truth. This goes hand in hand with their testimony of faith.

The Fourth Condition: Submission and Compliance

The fourth condition of shahaadah is submission and compliance (or al-inqiyad). This implies the actual physical enactment with our deeds of our shahaadah. In fact, this is one of the main meanings of the word Islam itself, "the submission to the will and commands of Allah." This is what Allah commands in the Qur'aan,



"Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him"

[Surah az-Zumar (39):54]

Allah has praised those who submit to His command by their actions. Allah says,

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُۥ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ﴾

"Who is better in religion than he who surrenders his purpose to Allah while doing good."

[Surah an-Nisaa' (4):125)

Actually, Allah has clearly made it a condition of faith that one submits to the command of Allah and His Messenger. Allah says,

﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ
بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا۟ فِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ
وَيُسَلِّمُوا۟ تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ ﴾

"But nay, by your Lord, they will not truly believe until they make you [the Messenger of Allah] judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of which you decide, and submit with full submission."

[Surah an-Nisaa (4):65]

Unfortunately, there are many claims that there is no relationship between faith and deeds. You can even hear one Muslim saying about another, "That is the best Muslim I have ever met." Yet the other person performs scarcely any of the deeds of Islam whatsoever. This incorrect understanding of faith has spread throughout the Muslim world.

Indeed, our shahaadah or testimony of faith must be implemented in our hearts, tongues and actions. In our hearts, we must have love for Allah, fear Allah and hope in Him. With our tongues we must testify to the shahaadah. And with our actions, we must implement what the testimony of faith requires from us. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet does no deeds, either does not understand Islam whatsoever or is bearing testimony against himself that his testimony of faith is not a true and correct testimony of faith.

This does not mean that the true believer never commits a sin. Indeed, true believers do commit sins. But as long as they recognize that what they did is not correct and it is inconsistent with their obligation of submitting to Allah, then they [have not de-

stroyed] their testimony or shahaadah. But, do not forget, they are still sinners.

And what is the minimum of submission that is required from a person beyond which there can be no claim to faith? For those scholars who say that the abandonment of prayers is kufr (infidelity), it is the five daily prayers. Whoever does not perform, at least, the five daily prayers has gone beyond the limit that is acceptable for lack of deeds. Allah knows best.

The Fifth Condition: Truthfulness

The fifth condition is truthfulness, as opposed to hypocrisy and dishonesty. This means that when we say the shahaadah, we are saying it honestly. We actually mean it. We are not lying when it comes to our testimony of faith.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> **“No one bears testimony to there being no one worth of worship save Allah, sincerely from his heart, except that Allah makes the Hell-fire forbidden for him.”** (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

We are all familiar with those who say the testimony of faith yet they are not saying it honestly. They do not believe in it but they are simply saying it in order to protect themselves or to get some gain from doing so. These are the hypocrites. Allah has described them in the opening of the Qur'aan with the following words,

﴿ وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَبِٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ وَمَا هُم
بِمُؤۡمِنِينَ ٨ يُخَٰدِعُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَمَا يَخۡدَعُونَ إِلَّآ
أَنفُسَهُمۡ وَمَا يَشۡعُرُونَ ٩ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٞ فَزَادَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مَرَضٗاۖ
وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمُۢ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكۡذِبُونَ ١٠ ﴾

“And of mankind are some who say, ‘We believe in Allah and the Last Day,’ when they believe not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves, but they perceive not. In their

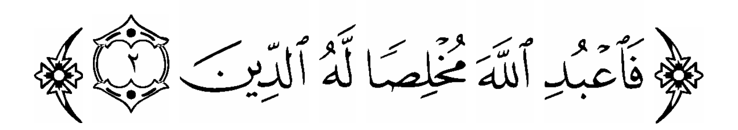
hearts is a disease, and Allah increases their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie.”

[Surah al-Baqarah (2):8-10]

Obviously, the shahaadah of those who become Muslim simply to benefit from being Muslim and not because they believe in Islam will be rejected by Allah in the Hereafter. They will face a painful punishment due to their lying.

The Sixth Condition: Sincerity

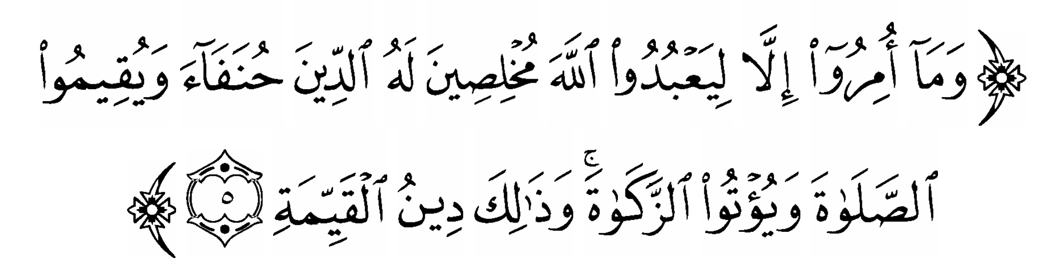
The sixth condition is sincerity (or ikhlaas). That is, when we make the shahaadah, we must do so solely for the sake of Allah. We must not do it for any other reason. And we must not do it for anyone else's sake. In this manner, the meaning of sincerity is opposite of Shirk or ascribing partners with Allah. We become and remain Muslims solely for Allah's sake. Allah says in the Qur'aan,



"Worship Allah, making religion pure for him"

[Surah az-Zumar (39):2]

And Allah also says,



"And they are ordained nothing else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due. That is true religion."

[Surah al-Bayyinah (98):5]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) added,

Allah has forbidden for the Hell-fire anyone who says, 'There is no one worthy of worship except Allah,' and say

so desiring the face [and pleasure] of Allah." (Recorded by Muslim)

This is something that we should [all] think about, but especially those of us who grew up in Muslim families and were born Muslim. We should make it very clear to ourselves that we are Muslims only for the sake of Allah. We are not Muslims for the sake of our parents, friends, family or community. It must be clear in our minds that we are Muslims for the sake of Allah first, last and only.

One of the signs that we are Muslims for the sake of Allah is that we do whatever Allah asks of us, regardless of what anybody else desires or wants from us. That is, in the same way that we are Muslims solely for the sake of Allah, all of our actions are done for the sake of Allah.

However, sometimes one begins to wonder whether this condition is met by some people. Some people from the Muslim world practice Islam to the extent that it is pleasing to their families. If there is anything in Islam that their families do not like- although their families are Muslim and therefore they actually should like all of Islam- then they do not practice that aspect of Islam. One common example of that nature is mixing between men and women. Sometimes a brother, here in the U.S., will not mix with women and his wife will remain separate from the men. Yet, when they return to their homes, because this is not pleasing to their families who want to mix between men and women, they easily, simply and happily compromise their religion for the sake of their parents. These people must sincerely ask themselves why they are Muslims. Are they Muslims for the sake of their parents and therefore whatever their parents like they will do and whatever their parents do not like they won't do? Or are they Muslims for the sake of Allah and therefore whatever Allah dislike they will not do and whatever Allah is pleased with they do?

The Seventh Condition: Love

The seventh condition is love. That is, the believer loves this shahaadah, he loves in accordance with the shahaadah, he loves the implications and requirements of the shahaadah and he loves those who act and strive for the sake of this shahaadah. This is a necessary condition of the shahaadah. If a person makes the shahaadah but does not love the shahaadah and what it stands for, then, in fact, his faith is not complete. It is not the faith of a true believer. And if he loves something more than this shahaadah or if he loves something more than Allah, then he has negated his shahaadah. The true believer, the one meeting the conditions of the shahaadah puts no one whatsoever as an equal to Allah in his love.

Allah says in the Qur'aan,

﴿وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ
ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ ۗ﴾

"Yet of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is due to) Allah only. However, those who believe are stauncher in their love of Allah."

[Surah al-Baqarah (2):165]

And elsewhere Allah says,

﴿ قُلْ إِن كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ
وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا
أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ ﴾

"Say: If your fathers, or your sons, or your brethren, or your wives, or your tribe, or the wealth you have acquired, or merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, or dwellings you desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. Allah guides not wrongdoing folk."

[Surah at-Tawbah (9):24]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

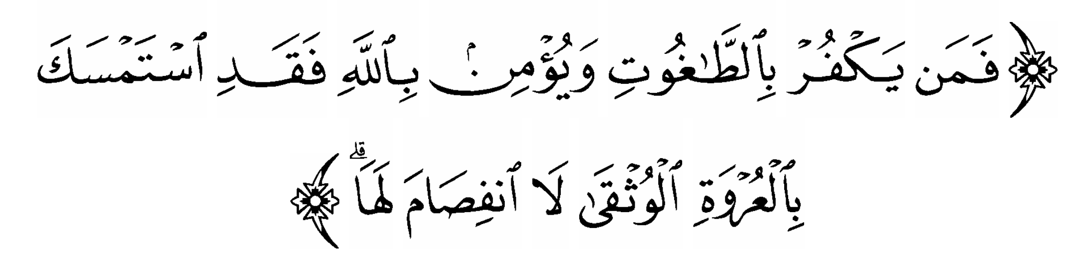
"Whoever has three characteristics has tasted the sweetness of faith. [The first of these] is that he loves Allah and His Messenger more than he loves anyone else..." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This is one of the most important aspects of Islam yet, for some reason, it is missing from the lives of many Muslims. They act in Islam as if Islam were a chore instead of doing things out of the love of Allah. When Allah orders us to do something, like bear witness to the faith, we should realize that that thing is pleasing to Allah and, therefore, out of our love for Allah, we should be very pleased to do the acts that are pleasing to Allah. But, as I said, this feeling is missing from many, many Muslims today.

The Eighth Condition: Denial of All Other Deities

The eighth condition of the shahaadah is that the person who makes the shahaadah must deny every other object of worship. Although that is clear in the words of the testimony of faith, it does not seem clear to everyone who makes that testimony. Therefore, I am mentioning it explicitly here.

In Surah al-Baqarah, Allah clearly reminds us of this important aspect of the shahaadah, the shahaadah is not merely an affirmation but it is both and affirmation and a negation. Allah states,



"And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold which will never break."
[Surah al-Baqarah (2):256]

Perhaps the Prophet (ﷺ) made this point even clearer when he said,

"Whoever says there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and denies whatever is worshipped besides Allah, then his wealth and blood are protected and his accounting will be with Allah." (Recorded by Muslim)

Although this condition should be obvious to everyone who says the words of shahaadah, you can still find Muslims who say the shahaadah and then make acts of worship for beings or things other than Allah. You will find them going to the graveyards and

worshipping those in the graves. They will perform acts of worship, not for the sake of Allah, but for the sake of the dead "saints" in the grave. What kind of shahaadah have these people made? Do you really think that their shahaadah will mean anything on the Day of Judgment as long as they believe that acts of worship may be done for other than Allah?

The Ninth Condition: Adherence to the Shahaadah until Death.

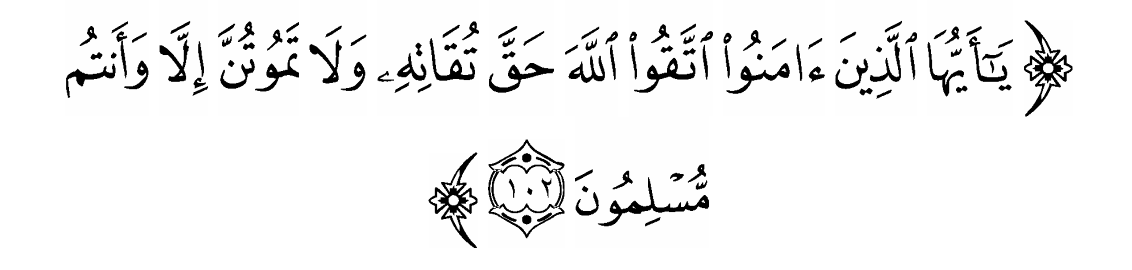
The ninth condition of the shahaadah is that the Muslim adheres to the shahaadah until he dies. This is must if the shahaadah is to mean anything for you in the Hereafter. You can not rest on your laurels of what you may have done in the past. No, indeed, the shahaadah must be your banner until your death. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> **"A man spends a long time doing the deeds of the people of Paradise and then he ends his deeds with the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire. And a man spends a long time doing the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire and then he ends his deeds with the deeds of the people of Paradise."** (Recorded by Muslim)

In another hadeeth, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> **"By the One whom there is no other God, one of you does the actions of Paradise until there is just a handspan between him and Paradise and then the book [preordainment] overtakes him and he does the actions of the people of Hell and he enters into it."** (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

And Allah says in the Qur'aan,



“O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as Muslims [surrendering yourselves to Allah]”

[Surah Aali-'Imran (3)102]

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, these are the conditions of the shahaadah. These are the aspects of the shahaadah that each and every one of us should look to in ourselves and ask ourselves, "Is my shahaadah meeting those requirements? Am I saying it sincerely, honestly and out of love for Allah? Am I saying it based on what it really means? Am I denying all other false objects of worship?..."

These questions we should ask ourselves now before we meet Allah. Allah willing, we shall ask ourselves these questions now and we shall find that we have all the right answers for them. Or, if we find we have some deficiency, we shall work to remove that deficiency. Such that, by Allah's mercy, in the Hereafter, our shahaadah will be the key to Paradise for us and the gates of Paradise will swing wide open for us and we will be able to live forever in the bounties of Paradise, with Allah being pleased with us.

Again, it is not simply a matter of knowing these conditions. Indeed, one can meet many Muslims who have these conditions memorized, yet when one looks to their deeds and behavior, one can see that these conditions have no effect on them. This means, in fact, no matter how well he knows and can rattle off these conditions, he, in fact, is not fulfilling them. In the Hereafter, his knowledge of these conditions will be of no avail to him. Indeed, his knowledge will be a proof against him as he clearly knows what the conditions are that he must satisfy yet he has shown that he is not willing to satisfy them in his life.